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AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY

The Snow Battle: Salt vs. Chemicals

Ending Paperwork Through Imaging?

Spotlight On Street Sweeping

Special Snow Conference Issue

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY®

April 1989 Vol. 104, No. 4

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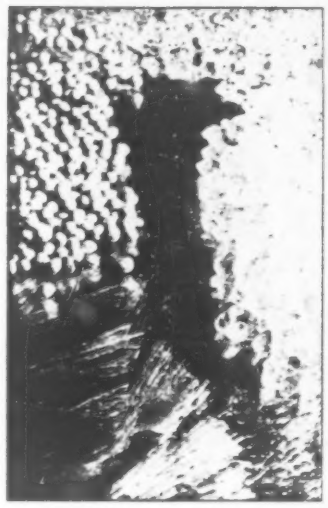
Cover photography by Arni Katz, Marietta, Ga.



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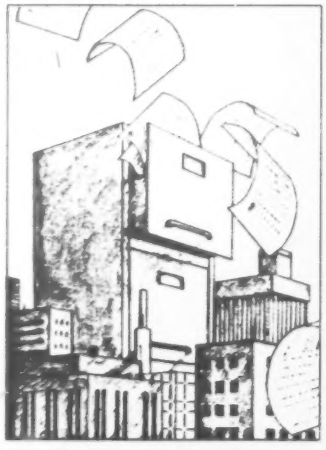

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A New Publisher, and an Invitation

We are pleased to introduce you this month to our new publisher, Gregg Herring, who has been active in the publishing business for 20 years.

Herring is a vice president of our parent company, Communication Channels, Inc., and has served in a management capacity on many of the company's other publications. Most recently, he has served as executive group publisher of the Technical Group at CCI. Sixteen of his 20 years in the business have been with Communication Channels.

Gregg Herring

"I look forward with great excitement to working in the important municipal sector," Herring says. "Obviously government at the local city and county level affects every citizen in the United States. I am humbled by the influence of *American City & County* magazine. I am excited to be a part of the process that will help all of our local governments meet the substantial challenges facing them now and in the future."

Some of those substantial challenges as well as some exciting frontiers were examined in depth last month when *American City & County's* Editorial Advisory Board met in Atlanta to help our staff chart its direction, assess its weaknesses and capitalize on its strengths.

Basically, the board, which includes some of the nation's top elected and appointed public officials, applauded the magazine's content and approach to exploring local problems, and the solution-oriented format.

Some said they would like to see the Across America column expanded and would like more of those application stories that support main feature articles in the magazine — stories that outline ways cities and counties are meeting the challenges that are common to all jurisdictions.

There also was discussion about reporting more on air pollution and the struggle many localities are having meeting air quality standards.

Board member Ron Jensen, Phoenix, Ariz., public works director, supported the positive approach to problem-solving taken by the magazine, but he pointed out that people can learn from failure as well as success and asked if readers might share some of their hardship stories.

He was among several of the advisers suggesting we encourage our readers to add their input to our editorial pages. We heartily agree and issue the invitation. Please pull up your soapboxes and participate in our discussion of the issues. We welcome your letters, one and all.

Let us know when we help you. And when we mislead you. When we do a public service and when we fail to. We want to hear your cheers — and your jeers, because that is how we gauge the best way to serve your needs. Tell us about a bad headline, tweek us about an incomplete story. Applaude or chide your colleagues when they are deserving and they may do the same for you.

We couldn't agree more with the 90-year-old ex-schoolteacher from Iowa who wrote *Time* magazine a couple of years ago, saying, "Letters are the best part of the magazine. They are the pulse of the public and stimulate my life."

In this month's issue, solutions to snow removal are explored in time for the annual snow conference of the American Public Works Association. We salute the efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to extract an affordable snow-melter from corn, and encourage those who are working to fine-tune and bring down the cost of chemical solutions to snow removal, as outlined in our cover story, "The Snow Battle: Chemicals vs. Salt."

Also noteworthy in this issue are the many high-tech innovations cities and counties are embracing to solve their paperwork and communication problems and to improve efficiency, save money and serve the public. In Virginia, six localities are using computerized audio storage devices to provide their citizens with 24-hour access to city hall via taped messages. Program coordinators in Blacksburg and Hampton show their sensitivity to their constituents when they say it is important with such a system to erase any perception that city employees are avoiding contact with citizens, or that the taped messages are just a kind of answering machine. Rather, the purpose of the systems is to make information available day and night, seven days a week. □

—Janette Mitchell

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY

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BPA

MUNICIPAL COST INDEXES

The **Municipal Cost Index** registered a 0.4 percent gain over last month, to 117.2, while the **Consumer Price Index** rose slightly more, 0.5 percent to 121.1. The **Producer Price Index** saw the largest jump, 1.2 percent over last month's 109.0. The **Construction Cost Index** showed the only decline, dropping 0.2 percent to 118.8.

Commodity readings that also dropped from last month include coal, concrete products, gasoline, glass, gypsum products, office machinery and cable wire. Petroleum registered the largest gain of any commodity, a rise of 12.2 percent to 49.6.

—Compiled by Tim Darnell

MOST RECENT MARKETBASKET

	Current Index	Percent Change From: Previous Month	Last Year
Air Conditioners	116.7	1.0	4.9
Apparel	113.4	0.1	3.2
Asphalt Roofing	96.0	−0.4	2.3
Ball Bearings	121.1	0.7	11.1
Coal	94.1	−0.6	−1.6
Communication Devices	103.9	0.6	0.5
Concrete Products	110.4	−0.1	0.6
Construction Machinery	115.2	1.8	4.2
Diesel Fuel	54.2	7.5	−0.7
Electric Components	119.5	0.6	3.0
Electric Power	110.8	0.2	2.8
Floor Coverings	116.9	0.3	3.7
Fuel Oil No. 2	56.1	9.1	1.1
Foundry Products	112.3	0.8	4.4
Furniture	126.8	0.3	4.6
Gasoline	55.4	−0.2	3.0
Generator Sets	126.1	1.0	6.4
Glass	110.6	−0.3	2.4
Glass Containers	112.3	0	0
Gypsum Products	111.1	−2.5	−8.1
Hardware	117.6	0.4	5.5
Heating Equipment	121.8	0.7	5.1
Industrial Chemicals	116.7	2.3	17.4
I.C. Engines	112.8	0.3	2.4
Iron	82.8	0	0.1
LP Gas	49.3	6.7	−10.4
Lumber	127.3	0	−3.3
Metal Fabrications	118.1	0.3	7.2
Mixed Fertilizers	108.3	1.9	5.4
Motor Vehicle Parts	108.2	0.3	1.9
Natural Gas	83.1	4.8	5.2
Office Machines	108.4	−0.3	2.2
Paint	125.4	1.1	13.0
Paper	128.7	0.8	9.0
Passenger Cars	116.4	0.1	3.9
Petroleum	49.6	12.2	−1.0
Plastics	140.8	0.6	15.9
Plumbing Fixtures	133.9	1.4	9.8
Plywood	105.6	1.0	0.3
Portland Cement	102.8	0	0.3
Pumps	112.7	1.2	5.7
Residual Fuel	41.9	5.3	−7.7
Rubber	109.9	0.4	0.9
Sand, Gravel	121.3	0.3	1.3
Sanitary Papers	117.9	0.2	5.7
Soaps, Detergents	119.8	0.1	7.5
Sporting Goods	107.3	0.7	2.5
Steel Mill Products	113.7	0.8	6.0
Switchgear	116.8	1.8	5.6
Synthetic Fibers	100.2	0.5	6.1
Tires, Tubes	95.9	0.4	3.8
Tools, Dies	112.3	0.3	2.3
Transformers	112.7	1.3	4.9
Transmissions	119.3	0.9	4.5
Trucks	117.1	0	5.7
Valves	117.8	0.9	6.8
Wire, Cable	147.3	−1.0	11.8
Wiring Devices	127.4	1.0	5.3

At-A-Glance Changes

MUNICIPAL COST INDEX

Last Year 112.8 — Previous Month 116.7 — This Month 117.2

Percent Change By: Month 0.4 Year 3.9

CONSTRUCTION COST INDEX

Last Year 116.4 — Previous Month 119.0 — This Month 118.8

Percent Change By: Month −0.2 Year 2.1

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (BLS)

Last Year 115.7 — Previous Month 120.5 — This Month 121.1

Percent Change By: Month 0.5 Year 4.7

PRODUCER PRICE INDEX (BLS)

Last Year 104.5 — Previous Month 109.0 — This Month 110.3

Percent Change By: Month 1.2 Year 5.6

These figures are calculated on a base year of 1982.

QUARTERLY MUNICIPAL TRENDS

	Current Level	Percent Change From: Last Qtr.	Last Year
Receipts	698.4	2.3	10.0
Federal Grants	109.4	−1.6	5.1
Durable Purchases	30.0	2.4	6.4
Consumables	48.0	5.0	27.7
Services	444.6	3.4	14.8
Structures	66.4	2.5	2.8
Salaries, Wages	347.8	2.8	12.2
Surplus	56.2	0.1	5.4
Employment	14.547M	0.9	3.9